



Skagway Fire Department

Municipality of Skagway

GATEWAY TO THE KLONDIKE

May 7, 2024

Fire Protection Update for Municipality of Skagway borough boundaries, including Dyea.

Critical Needs Identified in the FD audit as well as trends over the years have us focused on aggressively seeking funding opportunities to strengthen staffing levels and replace non-reliable equipment (radios and apparatus). In addition, we've been fortunate enough to come across funding opportunities that allow Skagway to create well thought out plans for projects such as a wildland fire management program for the borough, which we do not have in place. Below is the grant work conducted; we are currently in a holding pattern to see which grants may or may not be awarded. As funding becomes available, we can move forward with addressing the critical needs for the Municipality.

CWDG Application Content- The Alaska Municipal League (AML) is seeking funding to create or update Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) for eight AML member communities in two phases. Phase 1, spanning grant years 1-3, will focus on four communities: Koyukuk, Skagway, Dillingham, and Gustavus. These communities either have CWPPs that are over 5 years old or lack CWPPs altogether. Additionally, they meet specific criteria for project priority. The development of CWPPs within AML's project is crucial in achieving the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy's goals. These plans offer a localized and proactive approach to wildfire management, aligning perfectly with the strategy's objectives of restoring resilient landscapes, creating fire-adapted communities, and responding effectively to wildfires. This grant has been submitted and we are waiting for funding notification.

Volunteer Fire Capacity Program Grant- Research was conducted on this grant. The hope was to utilize the \$7000.00 maximum funding amount to improve communications in the Dyea area. The secondary options researched were a portable pump and structure training 1403 live fire (due to wildland certification being free of charge). The limiting factor for the grant is the \$7,000 max grant amount, with any single items over \$4,999.99 ineligible for funding. It was difficult finding a project that fit the grant requirements and addressed priorities/recommendations in the FD audit.

FD State Homeland Security Grant- This grant was submitted for an aerial truck (i.e. ladder truck) which was identified as a need in the FD audit, a Search and Rescue vehicle for emergency response in rough terrain, an "interoperable communications plan" that would identify specific communications/equipment needs/issues for the borough including Dyea, and funding for participation in a region-wide training exercise through the State of Alaska (also identified as a need in our State response assessment).

AFG Grant- FD submitted a regional grant with other FDs for replacement of 15 portable radios, as current ones range in excess of 20 years of age and are non-reliable/ functional.

SAFER Grant- FD submitted a grant focusing on increasing personnel, training, and personal protective equipment. We have been operating at minimum staffing capacity and have noticed trends in overlapping

calls (calls occurring at the same time). Due to State requirements and NFPA standards, a team of two trained personnel are not enough to handle the simultaneous calls.

Fire Prevention is the best way to try to ensure Fire Safety. The prevention programs that we've had in place for the Dyea Flats are still in effect, and we've seen no change in trends or increases in calls from years past specific to fire. These prevention programs are and listed below:

Metal fire rings- These are located at every camp site. These rings allow for the fire to be contained in the metal bowl for cooking and warming fires.

Red water buckets- We are working to ensure there are red buckets at each camp site for water and sporadically located throughout the flats.

Water Spigots- Though the handle needs to be pumped about 15 times, these are functioning and provide water in the campsite areas.

Signage- Municipal signage indicates that there is no burning outside of approved metal rings in the flats area.

Weather monitoring- We continue to watch the weather for red flag warnings in which burn bans will go into effect, or modified burn restrictions for the non-hydrated areas which is everything outside of the Skagway Townsite.

In addition to the fire prevention programs currently in place, we've been hard at work creating stronger operations and strategies for fire attack in our non-hydrated areas, which is everything outside of the Skagway Townsite.

Mutual Aid Agreements- Our Canadian Fire Service relations have been cultivated and strengthened over the last few years, and agreements have been established that allow for a mutual aid response both from Skagway and Yukon Territories. Canada is our truest "mutual aid" with road access. Of course, their aid is dependent on their availability. Which holds true for any other Alaska resources.


Drafting Sites- An additional water drafting site has been identified at Mathew's Creek. We stage 3,000 gallons of water on that property in our draft commander equipment to allow for filling our tenders and fill the water tank from the creek as our water is depleted. There are no other drafting sites on the road out to Dyea, yet we have houses that need fire protection and a closer located water supply. We've also identified the well in the National Park Service campground and hope to work with them on allowances for us to pipe into the well for water supply. This has been discussed in the past with not much movement, and we may call on the Assembly to help aid in a solution to utilize this resource. Water supply is a critical need for our non-hydrated areas of the borough. If a fire were to occur in these areas, we would initiate a water shuttle (tendering) operation while simultaneously conducting fire suppression. As you can imagine, this requires more personnel, at least two that can operate the tenders. These additional drafting sites offer a strong plan for maintaining a water supply in our engines as we perform fire suppression. Hopefully the SAFER grant awards us the funding needed for more available and trained personnel.

Community Assistance Funds- New idea to utilize \$15,000 (STC managed) for trained first responders at the dry cabin on the Flats. They'd handle all emergency responses while in-town crew is in route to the location. This is fairly late in the game to find a qualified individual, but something to work toward during the FY 25 budget planning cycle.

Downtown Urbanized and Historic District Fire Update:

Taylor Fire has been in town performing test on alarm systems, panels, sprinkler systems, and fire extinguishers. There is only building that is permanently disabled with is the Nome Saloon (aka Bites on Broadway/ Sitting Sasquatch). With Taylor Fire in town, I am certain the system can be restored to provide for Early Warning Notifications for Fire here in the near future.

We will be reinstating our fire inspection program and will be reaching out to building owners scheduling times to inspect buildings; offering guidance and education in ensuring fire and public safety is at the forefront in our downtown district.



Chief Emily Rauscher